

*The Rules and Measures of Alms-Giving, and the Manifest
Advantages of* CHARITY SCHOOLS.

A
SERMON
PREACH'D AT
St. PETER'S
IN
EXETER,

September the 26th, 1708.

First Preach'd, and now Printed, to Promote the
Setting up Charity Schools, for the Instruction
and Education of the Children of the Poor in that
City, and other Places in the Diocess.

By OFSPRING, Lord Bishop of EXON.

To which is added, his LETTER to the Clergy of his Diocess, upon the
same Subject.

EXON: Printed by Sam. Farley, for Phil. Bishop, 1708.

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THE LITTLE AND MEANS OF THE LITTLE
AND THE LITTLE OF THE LITTLE

SERMON

PREFACE

SEPTEMBER

IN

EXETER

SEPTEMBER 1708

THE LITTLE AND MEANS OF THE LITTLE
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BY THE REV. JAMES LITTLE

IN A SERMON PREACHED AT THE
LITTLE AND MEANS OF THE LITTLE

AND THE LITTLE OF THE LITTLE

To the Right Worshipful the
MAYOR,
 And to the Worshipful the
 Aldermen, Common-Council, and Citizens
 Of the CITY of
EXETER.

Gentlemen,

WHEN I Preach'd this Sermon at the Cathedral, I had no Design of ever making it more publick: Nevertheless, I readily comply'd with your Request to have it Printed, that I might not be thought wanting in a due Regard to you, who have so many Ways express'd your kind Respect to me, ever since my first Coming among you.

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To

The Dedication.

To this I was also encourag'd, by being told, after I was come to this Place, with what Readiness many of you had Subscrib'd towards the Good Work intended hereby to be promoted, the very next Day after the Sermon was Preach'd: Which gave me Ground to hope, that the Publication of it might have the same good Effect in other Places of my Diocess.

That God would be graciously pleas'd to multiply upon you his Mercies, both Temporal and Spiritual: That your City may ever Flourish, and daily Increase in Trade and Wealth, and be always safe under the Protection of the Almighty: And especially, that it may be eminent for Religion and Piety, and a Zeal of good Works, is the hearty Prayer, of,

Gentlemen,

Bath, Oct. 9th.
1708.

Your Affectionate Friend,

And Servant in Christ Jesus,

Ofsp. Exon.

St. L U K E VI. 30.

Give to every Man that asketh of thee—.

GIVE to every Man that asketh of thee— . But who is there, you'll say, sufficient for this? What One Man is there of Ability, to give Relief to all those many that need Relief? To feed all that are Hungry, and Cloath all that are Naked? What Man is there so Rich, who, if he should attempt to do this, would not quickly reduce himself to the Condition of those, who are most necessitous; and be himself as great an Object of Charity as any of those had been whom he had reliev'd?

It is certain therefore, that these Words are not to be understood strictly and literally; but according to Equity, and with reasonable Limitations and Restrictions. And what these Limitations and Restrictions are, and when we may in Reason and Equity be said to discharge this Precept, which, according to the Letter, is manifestly impracticable, it will be my chief Business at this time to shew.

First then: Some may ask Relief who need it not; nay, who perhaps are in better Condition to give, than those are, of whom they ask an Alms; So that if it were a Christian's Duty to give to every one that asked, *i. e.* to every one that pretended Want; the Greedy and Covetous, who can never be satisfied with what they have, would soon swallow up all, and the Charitable Christian would quickly be sent a Begging; and that

that too among those, whom he would not find so free to part with their Money to him, as he had been to others. These therefore are plainly not the Askers whom our Lord here means, when he bids us, *Give to every Man that asketh.*

Secondly, Some may ask Relief, who, though they need it enough, yet are not worthy to be relieved, being well able to maintain themselves by their own Industry, in some honest Labour or Employment; only that they chuse to beg, either because it is the easiest Way of getting a Living; or else, perhaps, because they find they can get more by Begging, than they could earn by honest Working. Such are for the most part our Wandring Beggars, Travellers, as they commonly call themselves, who have no settled Habitation, but rove about from one Part of the Kingdom to another, perhaps with counterfeit Sores, or Lameness, or with their Bastard, or, it may be, only borrow'd Children at their Backs, or in their Arms, to move Compassion; begging from some, and stealing from others, as Opportunity best serves; and designing to bring up their Children after them to their own Trade.

But neither are these any of the Askers whom our Lord here commands us to give to: *Give to every Man that asketh of thee.* Nay, so far is it from being our Duty to give any Relief to such, that it is expressly forbidden, not only by the Law of the Land, but by the Law of God too; as you may see in 2 Thes. 3. 6. *Now we command you Brethren, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye with-draw your selves from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Tradition which he receiv'd of us:* And what he means by the Disorderly Walker, he himself explains at the 11th Verse: *For we hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all:* And so far was it from being their Duty to maintain in their Idleness, such Disorderly

orderly Walkers by the Alms of the Church, that on the contrary he tells them, they ought to treat such as Excommunicated Persons, and to have no Company or Dealings at all with them: *We command you to with-draw your selves from them*: For so he himself explains that Phrase at the 14th Verse; *Note that Man, and have no Company with him.* And the Command which he gives here, he tells them at the 10th Verse of that Chapter, was in pursuance of a former Command which he had given in general, concerning all such idle and disorderly Persons: *For when we were with you, says he, this we commanded, that if any Man would not work, neither should he eat.*

The proper Treatment of such *Askers* or Beggars as these, is, First to find them Work, (the Want of which is the usual Pretext, though I believe seldom the true Cause, of their going about begging); and then to force them to work by hard Fare and due Correction.

But when the Beggars of both these Sorts are remov'd out of the Way, both those who do not want, and those who need not want, but through their own Fault; there will be still Objects enow left for the Exercise of this Christian Precept, *Give to every Man that asketh of thee.*

For indeed the True and Proper Objects of Charity (and of which 'tis probable there will be always Plenty enough; for the Poor, we are told, [*Levit. 25. 35.*] *shall never cease out of the Land*) are the Helpless Poor, *i. e.* such as cannot maintain themselves: Such are Infants and Children left poor Orphans by their Parents, and not yet of Age and Strength to be employ'd in Working: Such are those, who by reason of Age, Lameness or Sickness, are disabled from working in their Callings, as they have been used to do, and their Hands failing them, have no other Support;

port; such also are those who being as diligent and industrious as they can be, to maintain themselves and Families, in those Callings and Employments which they have been brought up to, are not able to earn enough for that Purpose, being either overburthened by a numerous or sick Family, or not able at all times to get so much Work as they could, and willingly would go thro' with. These I say, and such like, are the Persons that do both most need, and most deserve our Charity; these are those whom the Text speaks of, who *ask* of us, and to whom, when they ask, it is our Duty to give; *Give to every Man that asketh of thee.* Whoever is truly in want, and not able to support himself, is a proper Object of Charity; and to all that are such, to *every Man that asketh* of us, it is our Duty to give according to our Ability.

I say, *according to our Ability*: For this is certainly another Limitation or Restriction, that must necessarily be put upon this Universal Precept of Charity: *Give to every Man that asketh of thee; i. e. Do it if thou art able*: For the Design of it could not be to oblige any Man to give beyond his Ability; as the Richest Man of all must needs do, if he should relieve every one that was in real Want, even though it were by the smallest Alms; but only to engage us, within our Ability, to extend our Charity as far as we can; not to confine it to a few; not to restrain it to Relations, or Friends, or Country-Men; or to such only as are of our own Sect or Persuasion; or to such only as have deserved well of us, or at least have not deserved ill: But whenever we meet with a Proper Object of Charity, with one that greatly needs Relief; then, according to our Ability, we must be free in imparting and communicating to him such things as we have; and to the same Sense the *Apostle* exhorts us, *Gal. 6. 10. As we have Opportunity, let us do Good unto all Men.*

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But no one Man is of Ability to do Good unto all other Men: No Man has to give to *every One that asketh* of him, *i. e.* to every one that truly needs Relief: And therefore the Precept being so manifestly impracticable in the Strict Sense of the Words: *i. e.* If it be understood as laying an Obligation upon every individual Man, to supply the Wants of every other Man that is in need; it ought, I think, to be understood rather as given to *all in Conjunction*, to the whole Society of Christians, to the Company of Christ's Disciples: That the Care of the Poor, should be a Common Care, lying upon them all; and as obliging every one to contribute his Part or Proportion towards it; *Give to every Man that asketh: i. e.* Let every one that is in want, be relieved; let none be suffer'd to perish for need: And in order to this, let all that have any thing more than they are bound to use upon themselves, devote so much of what they have to Charitable Uses, that out of that Stock or Fund of Charity, which is rais'd by the Contribution of all that are able to give any thing, there may be sufficient to supply all the reasonable Necessities of all that are in want.

Or else, if the Precept be understood, as given to single and individual Persons; the best Method, as I suppose, (and I think the only one) of practising this Advice, is, by every Man's allotting a certain Portion of his own Income to Charitable Uses; and bestowing the same among those Poor, who are of his own Neighbourhood or Acquaintance; leaving others (because it is not in his single Power to relieve all that need; leaving others, I say) whose Wants he is not so well acquainted with; or who, though they may have reason to ask, yet have not so near a Claim to his Charity, to be reliev'd in like manner by others, who know their Needs better than he does; and who, by reason of their Neighbourhood, or

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Relation, or Acquaintance, are more strictly oblig'd to provide for, and supply their Wants, than he is.

And if now it be ask'd, *Who* they are that are thus oblig'd, according to their Ability, to contribute towards the Relief of the Poor and Needy? And *how much* every one is to give towards it?

To the First the Answer is easy; *He that hath two Coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath Meat, let him do likewise,* says St. John Baptist, Luke 3. 11. And, *whoso hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him,* says another St. John, the Apostle of our Lord, 1 Epist. 3. 17. By which it plainly appears, That every one that has any thing more than he must needs use himself, *He that hath two Coats,* and has need to wear but one of them, as well as he that has abundance of Superfluities; is to give thereof, for the Relief of those that have nothing, or not enough.

It is a great Mistake therefore of some, who, to excuse themselves, would lay the whole Burden of keeping the Poor, upon the Rich, as better able (in their Opinion) to bear the whole, than they are to bear any part of it. And by the same Reason they might lay the whole Burden of Taxes, and of all other publick Charges, upon them too.

But the Truth is, there is no Reason at all, either for the one, or the other of these. For it is agreeable to the Will of God, that there should be great Variety and Disparity in Men's Conditions; that some should be high and others low; that some should be richer, and others poorer: And according to a
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Man's Station and Condition in the World, such must his Expences be ; he must keep a better Table, he must be attended in better manner, he must bring up his Children after another way ; and according to the Rate of their Education, he must provide for them a larger Portion, than a Poorer Man needs to do : So that to them who are of higher Quality, and better Condition in the World, there are plainly more things that may truly be reckon'd necessary, than there are to others that are in a meaner Station ; the Charges of which being defray'd, the Rich Man may have no more Superfluity, no more that he can spare from himself, than a poorer Man: I do not mean that he may not spare a greater Sum in it self ; but I mean, not a greater Sum in Proportion to his Estate and Quality, than a Poorer Man, in proportion likewise to his Estate and Condition in the World, may spare to give away, with as little Inconvenience to himself and his Family. The Man that is in mean or moderate Circumstances, can't indeed give a Pound to Charitable Uses, so well as a Rich Man may do ; but he may give away a Shilling with as little Miss of it, with as little Abatement in his Way of Living, and with as little Inconvenience to himself and Family in all other Respects ; as he that has Twenty times his Estate or Income, can give away Twenty times as much. And whoever has any thing to spare, any thing that he is not forc'd by meer Necessity, to use and employ upon himself, and those that depend upon him for their Subsistence, is bound, out of that Superfluity, be it little or much, to give somewhat towards the Support of those, who have nothing else to support them, but the Charity of others. Even he that was once a Thief to supply his own Wants, is bound to labour with his Hands, to help to support those who have not Hands to work for themselves, as well as for Necessaries for his own use : For so the *Apostle* teaches, *Eph. 4. 28.* *Let him that stole, steal no more ; but rather let him labour,*

working with his Hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. And therefore it is a good Rule of Charity, though it be taken out of an Apocryphal Book, that was given by Tobit to his Son Tobias, [Tob. 4. 8.] If thou hast abundance, give Alms accordingly: If thou hast but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little; for thereby thou layest up a good Treasure for thy self against the Day of Necessity.

But the other Question afore-mentioned, namely, *how much* every Man that is able to give any thing, ought to give towards the Maintenance of the Poor and Helpless, is a Question not so easy to be resolved; because the right Resolution of it, depends upon the Consideration of several Circumstances, which are various and mutable, and hardly ever twice alike.

For it may be, that at some times there may be but *few* Poor, and then a small Contribution from all such as are able to give, may be sufficient for their support: And at other Times it may be (as it was in the Primitive Church, at the first preaching of Christianity by the *Apostles*) that the Multitude of the Helpless Poor may be so great, that the whole Annual Income or Increase of the Rich, may not be sufficient to maintain both themselves and the Poor; but it may be necessary to follow that Example that was set by the first Converts to Christianity; of whom 'tis said, *Acts 4. 34, 35. As many as were Possessors of Lands or Houses sold them, and brought the Price of the Things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles Feet, and Distribution was made unto every Man, according as he had need.*

And again: Though it has been said already, and may be truly said in general, that one Man is able to give away as much as another, *i. e.* not in Quantity but in Proportion; that one

one Man may give a Tenth, a Twentieth, a Thirtieth, or any other Part of his Income or Increase, as well as another Man that has a greater Income, can give away the same Proportion of that ; yet this Saying is liable to some Exceptions : For it may be, that of two Men who had the same sort of Education, who were bred up in the same Way of Living, who are of just the same Station and Degree in the World, and who have exactly the same Comings in ; one may have none to keep but himself, and none to provide for after he himself is dead ; and the other may have a great Charge of Children both to maintain and to provide for : And when there is such a great Difference in the Circumstances of those, who may be reckon'd to have the same Estate, it can't be expected that he that has so many more necessary Occasions of his own, both of spending and of laying up, than the other has, should be able to spare so much in quantity, or even in proportion to his Income, as the other may do, for Charitable Uses.

Moreover ; it may be also considered ; That a Burden that would be very light to all, if every one would bear his Proportion of it, may become exceeding heavy to some, if others, especially if many others, withdraw their Shoulders from it. And this Difference there is also in this Case, between some times and others : Sometimes there has been a Spirit of Charity visible among Christian People, a Zeal of good Works, a Holy Emulation or Striving to out-do each other in well doing : So it was in the Primitive Church ; their Love was Sincere, and their Charity fervent ; none was then for shifting off the Burden from himself to others ; but every one rather strove to bear as much of it himself as he could, and to give all the ease that might be to others. But at other Times it may be quite otherwise : Our Saviour himself foretels, [*Matth. 24. 12.*] that some time before his Second coming, *Iniquity shall abound, and the Charity of*
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many shall wax cold: And St. Paul speaking of the same time, says, [2 Tim. 3. 2.] that then *Men shall be Covetous and Lovers of themselves*. And when 'tis thus, when a great many of those who ought freely to contribute their Proportion towards defraying the common Charge of the helpless Poor, are so far from that, so far from giving any thing that they can keep, that they will hardly pay even what they are assels'd by Law to a Poor-Rate, 'till they are in danger of being Distrain'd upon for it; and what they are so compelled to Pay, comes from them like so much of their Hearts-blood: It must needs be, I say, that then the Burden must lie heavier upon those that are charitably and well disposed, and that the same Proportion of their Income or Increase, which at another time, if all were willing to bear their Share of the Charge, would be more than sufficient for the Relief of all that are in Want, may not then be near enough for that purpose; but it may be necessary then for such as are of charitable Minds, to be willing of themselves, to give *not only to their Power, but even beyond their Power*, as the Apostle speaks, [2 Cor. 8. 3.]; it may be needful then for such to allot a much larger Share of all their Worldly Goods to charitable uses, than in better times it would be requisite to do.

So that all the Answer that I suppose can be given to this Question; *How much every Man ought to give to those that ask or need Relief*: Or, *How much every Man ought to set apart and appropriate to the Uses of Charity*, must be in some general Rules; such as these:

1. All that ask must have; *Give to every Man that asketh of thee*; i. e. as I have already explained that Phrase: All that ask with reason, or all that have reason to ask, tho' perhaps they may be asham'd to Beg: All that are really in want, and not able by honest Diligence, in a Lawful way, to supply their own Wants,

Wants, must be reliev'd so far as their own Labour is insufficient ; or must be supported altogether, if they are not able to Labour at all, by the Alms and Charity of others : But not of one single Man ; for no one Man is sufficient thus to relieve or support all that need ; but by the joint Charity and Contribution of all that can spare any thing from themselves : And the less Care there is taken for a sufficient Supply of the Wants of such needy and helpless Persons by a Poor-rate ; the more Care must be taken of them by a private Distribution of Charity ; and the fewer there are that will be perswaded to give freely, the more free and generous in their Gifts must they be, who are perswaded that Alms-giving is a necessary Duty, without which, they can't be just before God ; and for the liberal Exercise whereof, they shall be greatly rewarded.

For it is certain, that no Man was sent into this World to be Starv'd ; But every one that is born into the World, if he be able to Labour, hath a Right to be Maintain'd by his Labour ; and every one that can't Work, has a Right to be Maintain'd without Working ; and there is in that ample Plenty and Provision which God has made for all his Creatures, a sufficient Portion, that is truly the Poor helpless Man's ; and which, tho' he cannot lawfully take to himself by Force or Fraud, from others who are possessed thereof ; yet they, on the other side, who are possess'd of it, can't withhold or detain from him without manifest Injustice on their side ; according to that saying of the *Wise Man* ; (Prov. 3. 27.) *With-hold not Good from them to whom it is due.* So that whoever has more of this Worlds Goods than he has need of for his own Use, is for the Residue or Overplus only a Trustee for the Poor ; and he is not a Righteous Man, he is false to his Trust, and unjust in his Stewardship, if he detains their Portion from them.

2. Another general Rule, as to the Measure and Proportion of what every Man should lay aside, for the Use of the helpless Poor, may be gather'd from those Words of the *Apostle*, in 1 Cor. 16. 2. *Let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prosper'd him: Like to which is that of the Son of Syrach; (Ecclus. 35. 10.) Give unto the most High, according as he hath enriched thee, and as thou hast gotten.* The meaning is, That every Man, whether his Gains are much or little, provided they be but any thing more than in a frugal way of living, according to his Station in the World, he is oblig'd to expend, to Maintain himself and Family; ought to lay aside at least a considerable Part, if not the whole, of what he can so spare, to bestow, as there is Occasion and as Opportunity offers, for the Relief of the Helpless Poor.

I say, First, What a Man can spare from himself in a frugal way of Living, *according to his Degree and Station in the World*: For there is no Question, but that they on whom God has bestow'd a large Share of worldly Goods, are allow'd by him to live after another Manner, in greater Plenty, and Grandeur, than a Poor Man can do; and in so Living, they do truly Spend the Bulk of their Estates, as they ought to do, and exercise a truer Charity to the Poor, than they would do if they should Fare hardly, and live Sordidly, and Meanly, very much below their Condition, and then give away all that they so sav'd to the Poor. For in living some way answerably to their Estate and Condition, they are helpful to the Working and Industrious Poor, whom by this means they find with honest Employment; and to a Man that is able to Work, it is a much better Charity to maintain him in Work, than it would be to maintain him in Idleness. Only then they must remember, that as there are some Poor than can Work, and whom they there-fore

fore do well to keep in work; so there are other Poor that can't work, and so must be maintain'd by Alms and Free Gifts.

And for this Reason it is also necessary (as I hinted before) that even they that have the greatest Incomes, and who may and ought to live in a Manner suitable thereto, should yet be *frugal* in their Way of Living, and careful not to out-spend themselves; nor indeed to spend so much, but that they may have somewhat left, somewhat that is proportional to the Greatness of their Estate and Income, to bestow for the Relief and Support of this other sort of Poor, which can do nothing of Work, or not enough Work to earn their Living by.

And therefore if there be any (and there are indeed too many such) that having good Estates, do out-spend themselves in High Living, or lose what they have by Carelessness, or waste it in Profuseness or Gaming; so that though they give little or nothing away to the Poor, yet they are so far from having any thing to spare, that they are rather continually running into Debt: These, I say, must not think to excuse themselves for their Want of Charity and Alms-giving, by saying (although they can say it truly) that they have nothing to give away; that all that they have, is scarcely enough for their own Use; and that if they had as much more than they have, they could very well imploy it upon themselves: For though their Case be indeed such as they represent it, yet it is their own Fault only that it is so; and one Fault will not serve to excuse another. For if even they that have nothing of their own, but only Hands to work with, are yet oblig'd to *work with those Hands*, that they *may have to give to him that needeth*, as the *Apostle* teaches in a Place already cited; much more, certainly, are they, who are bless'd by God with a large and plentiful Estate so that they have no need to work, obliged to be so

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frugal and husbandly in the Spending it, as that, after their own Occasions are serv'd, there may be a good Part of it left, to bestow in Alms, for the Support of the Poor and Helpless.

And this Overplus, this, be it more or less, that any Man can spare from himself in a sober and frugal Way of Living, answerable to his Estate and Degree, is either in whole or in part, the Poor's Portion.

Sometimes I say, it is so only *in Part* ; as namely : —

1st. When a Man's Income is raised only by a Trade, or Profession, or Employment, which in time to come may decline, wear off, or quite fail ; or for the Management whereof, a Man may in time to come, be rendred altogether unfit, by Sickness, Old Age, Decay of Strength or Senses, and the like. For in this Case he is not a Wise Man (but is sent by *Solomon* to the *Ant*, to learn Wisdom, *Prov.* 6. 6.) who is not both so diligent and industrious in his Business while it lasts ; as also so frugal in the ordering of his Expenses, as to lay up somewhat (besides what 'tis reasonable for him to allot to Charitable Uses ; somewhat, I say, besides) for himself, in a wise Provision against these not improbable, not uncommon Accidents.

2^{dly}, Some Part only, and not the whole, of what a Man can so spare from his necessary present Expenses, may be reckon'd the Poor's Portion, in case he has some, and especially if he has many that depend upon him, not only for a present Maintenance, but likewise for the Means and Foundation of a future Subsistence after his Death. For in this Case it is but reasonable that he should so lessen his way of Living, as to lay up more than otherwise he needed to do ; that so, neither his Chil-

Children may be brought up in an higher way of Living, than they will probably be able to maintain themselves in afterwards ; nor want a sufficient Stock, by the wise and diligent Management whereof, they may be able to keep themselves in as good Fashion as they have been brought up in.

But unless it be in these Cases, I think *the whole* of what a Man can spare from himself, in such a frugal way of Living as is answerable to his Estate and Quality, may well be reckon'd a Portion belonging to the Helpless Poor, and to be in some Measure misapply'd, if any Part of it be given from them, so long as there are Poor enow of that sort to give it to; which 'tis probable there always will be.

For if a Man's Yearly Income be rais'd by the Fruits and Profits of an Estate; of such an Estate, I mean, as is not wasting and perishable, or for a Term of Years, but permanent and of Inheritance; and if his Yearly Income arising thereby, be more than he has, or probably ever will have, a reasonable Occasion to spend upon himself; and if he has no Children to provide Portions for, either in his Life time, or after his Decease: To what purpose should this Man continually save, and lay up, and increase his Store? Or what Reason can he give for his so doing, which will not imply in it, either an unreasonable and irreligious Distrust of God's Providence, or else an inordinate Love of Riches? And certainly he may well apply the whole of this Overplus, to the Use of the Helpless Poor, to the Feeding the Hungry, and Cloathing the Naked, or to some other Works of Piety or Publick Charity, when he has plainly no Reason to apply any part of it to any other Use: He may well give it to the Poor when he has none else to give it to.

3^{dly}, Another general Direction, as to the Quantity and Proportion, that 'tis reasonable for every Man to lay aside out of his Income for the Use of the Poor and Helpless, may be taken from the Reason and Equity of that Law which was given to the *Jews* concerning this very Matter; which being a Law given to *all*, to them that had little coming in, as well as to those that had much, and to them that had a great Charge of their own to maintain, as well as to those that had fewer and smaller Occasions of Expence, may reasonably be thought to have laid no greater Burden upon any than what might well be born by all, and to have enjoyn'd the laying aside no greater a Proportion of every Man's Income or Increase for Charitable Uses, than what might well enough be spar'd, even by those who had the least coming in, and the most Charge of their own to keep; which Proportion therefore they that had greater Estates, and were not burden'd with so large a Family of their own, might in Reason and Equity (though they were not by the Letter of the Law) be thought bound to exceed.

The Law which I mean, and now refer to, you may see in *Deut. 16. 28, 29.* *At the End of Three Years thou shalt bring forth all the Tithes of thine Increase the same Year, and shalt lay it up within thy Gates: And the Levite, and the Stranger, and the Fatherless, and the Widow which are within thy Gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfy'd; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the Work of thine Hand which thou doest.*

Now though it must be confess'd that this, as it was a Law given to the *Jews*, does not oblige *Christians*; yet as it was a Law grounded on Equity and Reason, we may from hence fairly argue and collect (as the *Apostle St. Paul* frequently does, even

even from the Ceremonial Parts of the *Law of Moses*) what is the Duty of Christians in the like Case. For,

First, If so much as this, equivalent to a Thirtieth Part of every Man's Crop; that is, to be sure, a great deal more than a Twentieth, not much less perhaps than a Tenth part, of every Man's clear Yearly Gain or Increase (besides several other Charities else-where prescrib'd by the *Levitical Law*) was Due to the Poor, such a Due as could not be with-holden from them without Injustice; if without allotting at least thus much to Charitable uses, a Man could not be justify'd as a *Righteous Man* by the *Jewish Law*, it was necessary, that in order to be accounted by God a *merciful* or *charitable Man*, he should give more to charitable Uses, than he was strictly commanded to do by this Law. And,

Secondly, It may be further argu'd from hence, that seeing *our Righteousness* must exceed the *Righteousness* of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, not only the *Righteousness* which they practis'd, but the *Righteousness* which they were taught to practise by the *Law of Moses*; a *Christian* can hardly have a good Assurance towards God, and be justify'd in his own Conscience, if his *Righteousness* in this Particular comes short of theirs: A *Christian's Charity* certainly should not be less than a *Jew's Righteousness*.

But after all, seeing in the *New Testament*, which is the *Law of Christians*, there is not any thing particularly prescrib'd and commanded as to the Quantity or Proportion which every Man ought to give to those that ask; I shall not take upon me to prescribe or direct any thing more in this Matter. For that is true Charity, whether it be little or much, that a Man gives freely, and with a cheerful Mind, and out of Obedience to God,
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and a tender Commiseration of the Wants and Necessities of others.

This Matter therefore is, in great measure, left to be judg'd of by our selves, after due Consideration had both of the Number of proper Objects, the Pressingness of their Wants, what Provision is otherwise made for them, and what is a competent Relief; and likewise of the Obligations we are under to those of our own Family and Household.

And tho' in any Case almost that can be put, howsoever circumstantiated, it may be easy to say, what is manifestly a Deficiency in Charity, *viz.* When a Man that is well able to give away a good deal, gives away very little, a Trifle, next to nothing, not so much it may be as he allows himself to spend, and does spend, every Year, without Grudging, and without any Miss of it, upon meer Vanities and Superfluities: And tho' it be alike easy to say, on the other side, what is manifestly an Excess or Profuseness in Charity, *viz.* When a Man without any Regard to those whom Nature and near Relation has made the more peculiar Objects of his Care, and Kindness, gives away to Strangers all that he can spare from his own proper Use, or all that he does not spend upon his own self; to the utter Disappointment of the just and reasonable Expectations of his own Family and Household: (Tho', I say, it may be thus in most Cases easy enough to say, what is manifestly a Defect, and what is manifestly an Excess in Almsgiving) yet in the medium between these two Extremes, in which the Virtue of Charity or Almsgiving does lie, there may be great Latitude; and of two Persons in exactly the same Circumstances, one may give more, and for his greater Liberality may deserve to be highly commended; and yet the other, who gives less, may not be justly liable to Blame. And therefore all that the

Apostle

Apostle himself thought fit to prescribe in the Case was this; (2. Cor. 9.7.) Every Man according as he purposeth in his Heart; every Man as God hath prospered him; so let him give.

But nevertheless, tho' it be thus in great Measure left to every Mans own Conscience to judge how much, or what Part of his Gains or Income it is fit he should appropriate to, or bestow in charitable Uses; it highly concerns us all to judge fairly concerning this Matter; because whatever we judge concerning it God will judge over again, and it is his Judgment, not our own, by which we must stand or fall for ever.

And while we are judging of this, it should likewise be seriously thought of by us; That tho' a lesser Charity may be graciously accepted, it will not be so highly rewarded as a greater Charity will be; for, *He, says the Apostle, (2 Cor. 9. 6.) which Soweth sparingly shall Reap sparingly, and he that Soweth bountifully shall Reap also bountifully.*

And now, Tho' I fear I have already detain'd you too long, I nevertheless beg your farther Patience, while I briefly apply what has been said to a particular Occasion: And it is this;

There are a great many poor People, who by their diligent Working are able to provide themselves and their Families just with the Necessaries of Life, Meat, Drink, and Cloaths; (for which Reason they are not proper to be entred upon the List of such as are to be kept by a Poor-rate; because that's design'd only for those who by Reason either of Infancy, or Age, or Sickness, or other Disability can't work at all, or by all the Work they can do, can't Earn enough for their Support: Many such, I say, there are, who by their Labour can make a shift to find themselves and their Families with meer Necessaries)

ries) ; but that's all they can do : They have nothing to spare to lay out for the Education of their Children, nor are they able to instruct them themselves ; nor, if they were, have they any time to spare from their necessary Labours to do it in. The Consequence of which is, That these Children, thus left to themselves, do commonly spend their whole Time in Play and Idleness, and quickly learn of one another to Lie, and Swear, and Pilfer, and to speak prophanely and obscenely ; and all other Vices which in that Age they are capable of learning : And when they grow up to be older, having never been instructed in Religion, nor it may be so much as taught to read in the Bible, they make no Conscience how they behave themselves, either in Services, or in any other Employment that they are put to, very often will take to no honest Business at all, are not only not useful, but very often hurtful, in their Generation, and pass away their Manhood, and their Old Age too, if they live to it, in the same gross Ignorance that they did their Childhood, receiving no Benefit at all from their being born in a Christian Country, but only the bare Name of Christian.

To prevent therefore the manifold Mischiefs arising from a Want of Religious Education, and to give Hope that the next Generation may prove better than the Present ; a great many pious and well-dispos'd Persons, have lately taken in Hand, to procure Contributions for the Setting up Charity-Schools, for the Vertuous and Christian Education of the Children of the Poor : In which Schools the poor Children are taught to Read, and Write, and Work ; and are carefully instructed, out of the Church Catechism and other good Books, in the Principles of the Christian Faith and Practice : And in some of these Schools, where the Contributions are sufficient, the poor Children are decently, but plainly Cloathed ; all which Care is taken about them (they behaving themselves orderly) 'till they are fit to be
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put out to Services or Apprentiships, or to some Employment whereby they may earn their own Living. And such Progress has been made in this good Work, by God's Blessing upon the Charity and Zeal of those who have undertaken it, that in a very few Years last past (for 'tis but a few Years since the Design first began) most of the considerable Towns in *England* and *Wales*, have already such Charity-Schools erected in them: And there is hardly a County in *England*, in which there are not several of these Schools set up (as you may see in the Printed Account of them) except the two Counties of *Devonshire* and *Cornwal*; in which I can't find that the Work is so much as yet begun. But I trust we shall not lye much longer under this Reproach. Nay, I hope that as we have been hitherto more backward in this good Work, than any other part of the Nation; so we shall now be more zealous in it, than any of them; and by our Speed and Diligence therein, make some Amends for our having so long neglected it.

To this End, I have already recommended it to most of the considerable Towns within this Diocess, which I hope will have good Effect: And I now do the same to you, the Governours and Members of this Capital City; who, I hope, will think it your Honour, as I'm sure it is your Duty, to give a good Example in every thing that is Praise-worthy, to other Places of lesser Note in the Diocess.

Hoping therefore, that by what was said in the foregoing Discourse, you are fully convinc'd that it is your Duty, to devote to, and lay aside for, Charitable Uses, a good Portion out of your Annual Income or Increase: What I have further to do, (and for which I beg your Patience a little longer) is only to represent to you, what an excellent Charity this is, which I now propose to you; and consequently how very reasonable it

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is, that some part of the Money so devoted to, and laid by for, Pious and Charitable Uses, should be bestow'd this way.

And this will appear, by considering *First*, The Persons who are the Objects of this Charity: And *Secondly*, The Nature of that Relief that is hereby afforded to them.

First, By considering the Persons who are the Objects of this Charity; who are, without all Dispute, very proper Objects of Charity. For rarely, if ever, in Scripture, are the Objects of Charity reckon'd up; but the *Fatherless* are particularly mentioned: And *Fatherless* they may well be accounted, not only who are left Orphans by their Parents, but likewise they, whose Parents, though living, yet being in some Measure disabled from Working, either by Age or Sickness, or overburthened by a numerous Family, are not able to do the Office of Fathers to them, hardly to provide them with Necessaries, much less to spare any thing for their Education.

In other Objects to whom we extend our Charity, we may easily be mistaken, and we are doubtless very often mistaken in them. Every Day almost makes fresh Discoveries of such as have robbed the truly Poor, and taken the Bread (as it were) out of their Mouths, by pretending Sickness, Sores, Lameness, or want of Work; or by carrying about counterfeit Certificates of Shipwreck, Fire, Inundation, or other highly pitiable (because merely providential) Losses or Misfortunes: But in applying our Charity this Way, we go upon the surest Grounds; here we may be more confident that we are not impos'd upon, as to the Objects to whom we extend our Kindness: For, however they that come, or pretend to come, to us from a-far off, may put upon us by forg'd Certificates, or by telling their own sad and lamentable Story with such Life and

and Passion, that being not able to contradict it, we can't forbear believing it: Here we are subject to no such Cheat, because we know the State of our own Neighbours better, or we can with ease inform our selves, whether they are lazy or industrious, orderly or extravagant; whether they have few Children or many, and whether or no what they may fairly be suppos'd able to gain by their honest Labour, be sufficient to support and educate them.

And particularly, as to those who are the most immediate Objects of this Charity, *viz.* the Children themselves, we may be still more certain, that we are not cheated. A strong Man may, by some Art that may be used, appear to be weak and sickly; or a sound Person may, by counterfeit Lameness, or by Sores made and kept open on purpose, appear to us unable to work; but a grown Man or Woman, can by no Art that can be us'd, be made to appear to us in the Form of a Child: And if we see with our own Eyes that it is a Child, we may be sure that it wants Instruction; and consequently, that if his Parents either can't or don't make Provision for this, to provide for it other ways, is a most needful and seasonable Kindness. But,

Secondly, If we consider the Design of these Charity-Schools, and the Kindness that is thereby meant to be done to such poor Children, the Excellency and Usefulness of this Expression of our Charity to them, will thence farther appear.

Now, *First,* One Design of these Charity-Schools is to keep such poor Children from Idleness, the Mother of all Sin; to take them out of the Way of Temptation, and to inure them to Business, such as in that tender Age they are capable of; the blessed Consequence of which is like to be, that when they shall be grown up, they will have no Desire or Inclination to live idly, but will readily betake themselves to the Exercise of such honest Employments as they shall be brought up to.

So that what Money is laid out this way, is laid out to the most Advantage, both to them on whom it is laid out, and to the publick.

First, to them on whom it is laid out: For is it not plainly for the Advantage of a poor Man, to have a constant Pension given him, rather than only a Meal's-Meat? Is it not plainly a greater Kindness to support him during his whole Life, than only for a short time? But now that's what in Effect this Method of Charity does to the poor Children whom it relieves: It does in Effect settle upon them a perpetual Pension or Annuity; and that too without more Charge than it would have been, to have given them only a present Relief. Nay, indeed that Ability which this sort of Education gives them to maintain themselves ever after by their own Labour, is a much truer Kindness to them, than it would be to settle upon them a Pension or Annuity, on which they might live ever after in Ease and Idleness.

In this Respect also, what Money is laid out this way, is laid out to very great Advantage to the publick: For by this Means, many are brought up to honest Trades and Employments, and are thereby made useful Members of the Society, who would otherwise, very probably, have been the Plagues of it; who having pass'd their Childhood and first Youth in Idleness, in playing and loitering about, would never after have been dispos'd, or well able, to take to Business; and who having then learn'd to lye, and cheat, and pilfer, would have improv'd continually in those Vices as they had done in Years, until they had been cut off, it may be, before the middle of their Days, by the Executioner of publick Justice. But,

Secondly, Another, indeed the main, the most direct and immediate Design of these Charity-Schools, is to instruct those poor Children that are taken into them, in the Principles of the Christian Religion: In order to which, they are not only taught

taught to read, but carefully instructed in the Church-Catechism, the Answers in which they are not only taught to repeat, but also made to understand : They are besides kept constantly to their Prayers, made duly to frequent the Church, and have their whole Behaviour narrowly observ'd, in order to check the first Appearances of Sin in them, by proper Reproof or Correction.

And in this Respect, the Charity Money employ'd to this Use, is certainly bestow'd to good Purpose ; indeed to the best purpose that such Money could be laid out.

For by other common Expressions of Charity, we yield Relief only to the Bodies of Men, either putting them into a Capacity of maintaining themselves and Families by their own Labour, or supplying to them out of our Abundance, those Necessaries of Life, which their own honest Industry was not sufficient to procure : But by this we help to put them into the best Capacity of providing for another and better Life : By this we help to teach them the most useful Art, that of Living well ; and the most gainful Trade, that of laying up Treasures in Heaven, which will never fail them.

Besides : Other Instances of Charity commonly terminate in those Objects to whom immediately we express our Kindness. Thus, when we give Bread to the Hungry, or Drink to the Thirsty, or cover the Naked with a Garment, we afford indeed most seasonable Relief and Comfort to our poor Neighbour himself, who is in great Distress : But the Benefit reaches no farther, (unless it be accidentally) than to his own Person ; and that too but for a short time : Whereas what we bestow in the good Education of the Children of the Poor, and in well-seasoning them at first with the Principles of the true Religion, is of more universal and lasting Benefit : It does them good not only for the present, but for all their Lives after ; according to that Observation of the *Wise Man*, [Prov. 22.6. *Train up a Child*

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in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. And the good Instructions which they receive in their early Years, and which, 'tis to be hop'd, they will retain and be influenc'd by as long as they live, are a Benefit, not only to themselves, but to the whole World besides; for they make them better and more useful in every Relation, than they would otherwise be. And the Benefit thereof reaches likewise beyond their own Times; it may reach to many Generations, and 'tis to be hop'd it will: For none but such as are very ignorant themselves, can indure that their Children should be bred up in Ignorance. So that they who shall be sensible of the great Benefit which they themselves receiv'd from the Charity of others, by being taught to read and write, and instructed early in the Grounds of Religion, will labour and strain hard, rather than their own Children should be without the same Benefit: And, if they be good Men (and there's no Means more likely to make them such, than a good Education) they will both know it to be a part of their Duty, and not suffer themselves in the Neglect of it, to bring up their own Children in the Fear of God, and in the Knowledge of their Duty, according to the good Example of *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful; of whom God himself gives this Testimony, [*Gen. 18. 19.*] *I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.*

The manifold Excellency and Usefulness of this Exercise and Expression of Charity being therefore so manifest, I shall add nothing more to persuade you to it.

I shall only pray God, *who is able to make all Grace abound, that ye always, having all Sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good Work; Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.*

The

The Lord Bishop of Exeter's Letter to the Clergy of his Diocese.

Good Brother,

I HEARTILT Recommend to you the Perusal of Dr. Mosse's Excellent Sermon herewith sent to you, and of the Account of the Charity-Schools in England and Wales there-to annex'd; by the former you will see (what I doubt not but you are already sufficiently perswaded of) the great Piety, and the manifold Advantages of setting up such Schools, and by the latter, what a good Disposition there is in the whole Nation to so good a Work, the best appearing Ground of Hope (I think) we have of the Continuance of God's Favour towards us.

It was a Matter both of Wonder and Concern to me, to observe, that in the said Account of the Charity-Schools, there is not so much as one Place noted in the whole Diocese of EXETER, wherein any such School hath been yet erected; it will be our Part therefore now, by a greater Zeal for this work of Piety and Charity, to make some Amends for our Backwardness therein.

In order to which, I earnestly recommend it to you, to communicate the Contents of the aforementioned Sermon and Account, and likewise of this Letter, to such of your Neighbouring Gentry and Clergy, as you have Reason to hope will be ready to further such a Pious Design; and if you can procure any Gifts, or Annual Subscriptions

The Bishop's Letter, &c.

scriptions towards it, then, upon Consultation with them, to set up, with all the speed that may be, some School or Schools of this kind, in such Place or Places within your Neighbourhood, as shall be thought most convenient.

And let not, I beseech you, the smallness of the first Gifts or Subscriptions be any Discouragement to you, from beginning this Work: For those Schools, of this sort, in other Parts of the Kingdom, which are now the most Flourishing, had at first but a slender Beginning; and when the Work is once begun, it will quickly recommend it self, and the Charity of a few will, I doubt not, provoke very many.

My stay in the Country now will be very short, so that I can't expect, before I go to Parliament, to see any Progress made in this Work; but I hope, when I shall make a Visitation throughout the Diocess, which (God willing) I design to do next Summer, to find it in a good forwardness. And being persuaded, that you can't any way do better Service to God and Religion, than by encouraging this Work of Charity, I must own, that I shall have the best Opinion of those of my Clergy, whom I shall find to have been the most forward to Promote it.

I heartily commend you, and your Labours, to the Blessing of
God, and remain,

Your
Loving Friend and Brother,

Exon, Sept. 4.
1708.

Ofsp. Exon.

F I N I S.